



North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation

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Michael F. Easley
Governor

August 2007

Volume 21 Number 4

William G. Ross Jr.
Secretary, DENR

NEW RIVER DEDICATES VISITOR CENTER

New River State Park in Ashe and Alleghany counties dedicated a new visitor center, exhibit hall and other features of a major development phase at its US 221 Access June 29.

More than 75 people attended to mark a significant milestone in the history of the 31-year-old state park. Park neighbor Pete Absher snipped a ribbon to open the facilities.

The development project at the 195-acre access rep-

resents an investment of \$6.6 million from the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. The trust fund is supported by the state's tax on real estate deed transfers and is the principal funding source for land acquisition and capital improvements in the state parks system.

"The state parks system has been committed to the development of this area for many years and this brings New River State Park to a new level

in offering opportunities for recreation and environmental education and in serving as a focal point for the community," said Lewis Ledford, director.

"It also reflects the high regard that people in North Carolina have for this beautiful river and what it represents for conservation in our state."

Completion of development at the US 221 Access shifts the park's management

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BIRDING TRAIL WINDS THROUGH PARKS

Today's target of choice was the painted bunting.

The flash of color darting among the dunes at Hammocks Beach State Park was no easy mark. But, some of the state's most serious birders were on the field trip minutes after the North Carolina Birding Trail was inaugurated.

The birding trail itself is a serious project. It's the first installment of a carefully orchestrated effort to cater to aficionados of birding – the fastest growing outdoor activity, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) – while nurturing economic development and conservation.

Chris Canfield, executive director of Audubon North



RANGER SAM BLAND SPOTS A PAINTED BUNTING AT HAMMOCKS BEACH.

Carolina and one of the birders at hand, said such trails "are crucial to increasing people's appreciation of resources in North Carolina. And, it's

equally critical to connect those resources to the economic vitality of its counties."

Some two dozen states

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Department of Environment and Natural Resources

From The Director's Desk

It's been my pleasure recently to participate in a series of public events that placed our state parks in the limelight. Each offered opportunities to make some new friends and renew old friendships.

The crowd at the dedication of the visitor center and related facilities at New River State Park was perhaps the largest ever for that type of event. It reflects the community's love for the river and the park. Rep. Cullie Tarleton was kind enough to join us, and Sandy Davison, a founding member of the National Committee for the New River, shared the stage as we cut the ribbon on the 16th state park visitor center built in the past 12 years. All the visitors that day seemed impressed with the quality of the improvements at the park.

At Hammocks Beach State Park, it was a reasonably brief ceremony that opened the coastal section of the N.C. Birding Trail even with the six speakers representing partner organizations. To my mind, there could not have been a better venue for such a presentation, and we're proud that 14 state parks are listed as sites on the trail.

At Hanging Rock State Park we dedicated two important trail projects and new vacation cabins. A lesser-known fact about the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund is it has enabled the parks system to upgrade miles of seriously worn trails to protect the landscape and improve safety and visitor experience. Beyond funding for regular trail maintenance throughout the system, the fund has provided \$4.5 million for nine renovation projects in the west district.

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority had a very productive meeting in the new visitor center at South Mountains State Park, approving 15 grants totaling more than \$4 million for local government park and recreation projects. When combined with grants awarded at the authority's May meeting, the trust fund provided \$17 million for 54 local government projects. The authority considered 80 grant applications requesting more than \$24 million. After the business meeting, members were treated to a very informative and interesting tour of the Waldensian Trail of Faith in Valdese. Sen. Jim Jacumin personally conducted a tour of the site.

The 2007 General Assembly considered a wide variety of bills and issues that affect the division. We will provide a comprehensive summary in the next issue of *The Steward*.

As this issue goes to print, we are reviewing the specific components of the budget bill signed by Gov. Mike Easley July 31. We are excited about additional funding for protecting open space included in the budget. Lawmakers authorized the issuance of \$120 million in Certificates of Participation for the acquisition of state park lands, conservation areas and land to promote waterfront access. The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and the Natural Heritage Trust Fund are designated to each receive \$50 million. The debt is to be serviced through revenues of the two trust funds.

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford

UP CLOSE & 'PERSONNEL'

Victor Freeman has been promoted to Park Ranger II at Jones Lake State Park. He has spent two years at Lake Waccamaw State Park and about one year at South Mountains State Park. He holds a bachelor's degree in recreation management from UNC at Pembroke and attended high school in Fairmont.

Robert Byrd is the new maintenance mechanic at Haw River State Park. He worked at The Summit conference center there for eight years as operations manager and has nine years of related experience. He graduated from Reidsville Senior High School in 1990.

Bobby Tetterton has joined the staff of Pettigrew State Park as a maintenance mechanic. A graduate of Bath High School, he attended Beaufort County Community College and has 15 years of related experience.

Jean Lynch is the new coastal region biologist for the division. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees in history from Catholic University of America and a master's degree in environmental science from Duke University. She was formerly a habitat analyst for the New York City Audubon Society and has worked for The Nature Conservancy.

Christopher Cabral is a new park ranger at Goose Creek State Park. He attended high school in Concord and earned a bachelor's degree in geography from East Carolina University in 1998. He is an U.S. Air Force veteran.

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KOREAN GROUP TOURS STATE PARKS

Fifteen South Korean officials toured three North Carolina state parks and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in May, a visit coordinated by the state's Office of Environmental Education.

The group wanted to learn more about trail management to assist in the expansion of their nation's trail system. South Korea recently phased in a five-day workweek, and the increased leisure time has led to crowded parks and trails.

The South Korean team, mostly forest service employees, put many miles on their hiking boots as they met with staff at William B. Umstead, Hanging Rock and Pilot Mountain state parks.

The South Korea/North Carolina connection continues in 2008, when an intern from



DELEGATION TAKES IN THE SITES AT PILOT MOUNTAIN.

South Korea will spend two years in Raleigh working with several state programs, including the state parks system.

PERSONNEL

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William Jones Jr. has joined the staff of Dismal Swamp State Natural Area as a maintenance mechanic. He attended high school in Dunn, attended Vance Granville Community College and has worked at Jockey's Ridge State Park and with the N.C. Highway Patrol.

Robert Preston is a new park ranger at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area. He attended high school in Wayne, W.Va., and earned a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation

management. He was formerly a corrections officer and a seasonal employee for West Virginia State Parks.

Darren Fulcher has been promoted to Mechanic II at Hammocks Beach State Park. He has been a maintenance mechanic at the park for more than a year. He is a 1981 graduate of East Carteret High School and attended Appalachian State University.

Joseph Martin has been promoted to Park Ranger II at Eno River State Park. He

has been a ranger at Mount Mitchell State Park for three years and is a graduate of N.C. State University with a bachelor's degree in fish and wildlife science.

David Upham is the new maintenance mechanic at William B. Umstead State Park. He graduated from Jacksonville High School in 1985 and brings more than four years experience to the position including work as a grounds maintenance supervisor at the Dorothea Dix campus.

'PARK' IT

WITH A STATE PARKS
SPECIALTY LICENSE TAG

The Division of Parks and Recreation is accepting applications and payment for the first 300 license plates. There is a \$30 fee in addition to regular license fees (\$60 for personalized plates). Additional fees support conservation through the Parks and Recreation and Natural Heritage trust funds.

Applications online at www.ncsparks.net
or write: Adrienne McCoig, N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
1615 MSC, Raleigh, NC 27699-1615



MORE THAN 75 PEOPLE FROM THE AREA JOINED IN THE DEDICATION CEREMONY AT THE STATE PARKS SYSTEM'S NEWEST VISITOR CENTER AT NEW RIVER STATE PARK.



NEW RIVER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and much of its focus from the Wagoner Access several miles upstream. The US 221 Access is near the center of the park's holdings along the river corridor.

Sandy Davison, chairman of the parks advisory committee and a founding member of the National Committee for the New River, told the attendees, "The first visitor center at Wagoner was a leaky trailer."

Davison noted that the park's original 1977 management plan called for a visitor center, a vision never abandoned by park supporters or its staff, including former superintendent Jay Wild.

He, Ledford and others expressed regret that Wild

could not attend due to a family emergency.

The 14,000-square-foot visitor center will serve an important educational role with its integrated exhibit hall. Museum-quality exhibits there are augmented by a teaching auditorium, a laboratory/classroom and staff offices.

Mike Lambert, park superintendent, said, "In my opinion, the greatest advantage of this building is that it will be a primary place for learning."

The structure was designed by Edwin Boudin Architects of Winston-Salem, and the contractor was James R. Vannoy & Sons of Jefferson.

An improved camp-

ground nearby includes a bathhouse and 20 campsites, half of which offer utility connections for trailers and recreational vehicles. Along with its community building, the access now offers a 1,230-square-foot picnic shelter.

The maintenance complex is designed for long-term care of the visitor facilities and includes a mechanic shop, vehicle storage area and a 3,440-square-foot woodworking shop.

Dr. Pat Mitchell, director of Ashe County Economic Development, said the visitor center and related facilities add to the mountain community's high quality of life.

And tourism, which is a big part of the area's economy, is almost totally dependant on quality of life amenities, she said.

"Can you put a value on a child getting in touch with nature here or our ability to walk a trail or see the views that are out here?" she said. "This beautiful park and the visitor center are absolutely perfect examples of the quality of life component of economic development."

The park now encompasses 2,339 acres. Principal accesses are at Wagoner Road, US 221 and near the Ashe/Alleghany county line, and nu-



PETE ABSHER, CENTER, A NEIGHBOR OF THE PARK, CUT THE RIBBON TO OPEN THE VISITOR CENTER. SUPERINTENDENT MIKE LAMBERT IS AT LEFT.

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NEW RIVER

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merous smaller parcels lie along the corridor.

Last year, the park dedicated the 638-acre Bower/Darnell property just downstream of the Wagoner Access. It was the largest single tract ever acquired.

The state park was established in 1976, the same year that a 26.5-mile segment of the New River won a federal wild and scenic designation. In 1998, the New was designated as an American Heritage River, the nation's first.

Along the way, many people have made strong commitments to conservation of the New River, and it holds a special place in the hearts and minds



PEOPLE ATTENDING THE DEDICATION CEREMONY SPENT TIME TOURING THE VISITOR CENTER AND ITS EXHIBIT HALL, WHICH EXPLORES THE NATURAL RESOURCES AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE PARK.

of the communities along its banks, Ledford said.

"In the 1970s, we believed in this river, its beauty

and the potential for success of New River State Park. The state parks system continues to believe in the New River."

BENNER GIVEN PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Robert Benner, a past chairman of the N.C. Trails Committee, was honored in May with the President's Volunteer Service Award for his work in planning and building 76 miles of North Carolina's Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson presented the award to Benner in Boone.

"Today we honor Bob Benner for answering President Bush's call to serve a cause greater than himself," Johnson said. "Dedicated volunteers like Bob are inspiring others to join them in delivering America a brighter, healthier future."

Benner has worked as a Mountains-to-Sea Trail volunteer for 35 years and is a leader of the Central Blue Ridge Task Force, which oversees the 76-mile stretch of the trail from Black Mountain Campground to Beacon Heights.

Benner and his crew of volunteers built the segment and maintains it throughout the year.

Benner currently serves as a board member for Friends of State Parks, the Foothills Land Conservancy and Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

The President's Volunteer Service Award was created by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. It is available to youth who have completed 50 or more hours of volun-



JOHNSON, LEFT, OF EPA GIVES AWARD TO BENNER for volunteer service; to individuals who have completed 100 or more hours; and to families or groups who have completed 200 or more hours.

GORGES VIDEO WINS AWARD

The Agency for Public Telecommunications of the N.C. Department of Administration won three international Telly Awards, one of them for a video about Gorges State Park.

"Gorges State Park: A Jewel of Natural Diversity," produced for the state parks system, received a Silver Telly for Excellence in Non-Broadcast Productions.

The video will be shown to park visitors in a exhibit hall when it is constructed within a planned visitor center.

PARKS SYSTEM RECRUITS RESEARCHERS

State parks have, at times, been called living laboratories for such sciences as botany, biology, geology and hydrology. They offer acres of both ordinary and rare habitats and ecosystems and some of those have sat undisturbed for decades.

Now the state parks system wants to lure more university researchers into these natural laboratories more often.

To launch a recruiting effort, the system's five-person resource management team sat down recently with six university scholars as a new Natural Resource Research Advisory Committee. The professors represented Appalachian State University, Duke University, UNC-Wilmington, UNC-Greensboro and NC State University.

The brainstorming was about how to dovetail the particular interests of researchers with needs that the state parks system has for hard data and scholarly research – the kind that leads to good stewardship in the parks.

"The parks are under-utilized for research," said Brian Strong, head of the parks' resource management staff. "It's been a challenge making decisions without enough knowledge and research into what we're doing."

Strong said that more long-term and detailed studies could affect such park decisions as where facilities and trails can be located or the best management strategy for an area.

Research at state parks has been spotty. Before the 1980s, there were perhaps a half dozen well-regarded theses



UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS MET WITH STATE PARKS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STAFF AT THE SUMMIT TO EXPLORE RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES.



on flora and fauna conducted in the parks. In 1983, the system adopted a policy for research permits and 22 were granted that year.

In 1998, there were 39 permits granted, and in 2006, there were 57. Only a portion of these lead to theses or published papers, and the parks don't always get back the results of research.

Strong's staff includes three regional biologists dealing with issues such as invasive species, exotic animals, fire management, environmental compliance (for facilities and projects) and potential threats near park boundaries. A fourth biologist is primarily devoted to inventory and monitoring of species.

"We've tried to be more deliberate in how we go about managing these parks," Strong

said. "We're getting to the point where we want to work with and collaborate with other researchers.

The staff has begun listing and setting priorities for research needs in the state parks. Only about two-thirds of the parks have been surveyed to date, yet about 330 potential research studies have been identified.

Marshall Ellis, mountain region biologist, said, "This is basically our shopping list of what we see as research needs. We have loads of high-quality projects that should appeal to university researchers."

There have been six studies in recent years funded through the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, ranging from a look at the hydrology of Merchants Millpond to ongoing research of trout habitat at Stone Mountain.

Studies supported by the trust fund generally must be linked to a pending capital project, Strong said. Most "pure

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NEW BEETLE SPECIES FOUND AT JONES

By Maxi Polihronaskis, Student
University of Connecticut

June beetles are the big, brown, shiny, and sometimes hairy, scarab beetles that loudly bang into your porch screens on warm, humid spring nights. To casual and skilled observers alike, all look extremely similar, and one might assume that they are all the same species.

However, there are about 120 species of June beetles in the genus *Phyllophaga* endemic to the east coast of the United States. For my graduate research at the University of Connecticut, I am investigating why so many species look so similar.

One important aspect of my research project is to travel and collect beetles so that I can extract and sequence their DNA in order to determine how they are all related to one another.

Because June beetles are nocturnal, the easiest way to collect them is to set up lights at dusk and wait for them to fly in. Although this sounds easy, finding the right places that will yield a diverse catch can be very difficult.

When I arrived at Jones Lake State Park to set up camp and collect beetles for two nights in May, the habitat did not look very promising for June beetles. These beetles spend most of their life in the ground and can be particular about the type of soils they inhabit. Also, adult June beetles are foliage feeders, and so appropriate habitats usually include a diversity of deciduous trees.

After taking note of the sandy soils and predominance of conifers at Jones Lake, I didn't think there would be very many June beetles flying to the lights that night.

However, after collecting beetles for two



PHYLLOPHAGA NEGULOSA COLLECTED AT JONES LAKE

nights, I had about 20 specimens. During the identification process, I found many male and female specimens that I could not identify using the usual set of characteristics in identification keys.

I needed help so I emailed some photos to Paul K. Lago at the University of Mississippi, an expert at scarab beetle identification. He could not identify the specimens either, and after looking through the literature, we decided I had discovered a new species of *Phyllophaga* scarab beetle at Jones Lake State Park.

I have named this new species *Phyllophaga nebulosa*, 'nebul' meaning mist in Latin, after my sister Misty.

RESEARCH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

science" research is funded through universities or institutions or performed by volunteers.

Besides its habitats, Strong said that parks can sometimes offer other help for researchers – quarters in some parks with seasonal dormitories and rangers who have specialized education and interest in the work.

Julie Reynolds, a professor at Duke University, said state parks and universities should be able to work more closely. There's more interest lately in "community service" research that

serves a specific need, she said. "I've been trying to define what this looks like on the ground."

Some of Reynolds' students were involved in mammal inventories at Eno River State Park in 2006.

Richard Brahm of NC State University acknowledged that scholars don't often look to state parks for research opportunities. "I'd like to hear what the parks would like to know and would like to see parks listen to others about what they should like to know."

TRUST FUND SUPPORTS LAND PURCHASES

The N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority approved grant requests totaling \$8.2 million for key land acquisitions at Hickory Nut Gorge and Lake Norman state parks.

Eleven tracts at Hickory Nut Gorge will be purchased for \$5.88 million. The acquisitions totaling 281 acres will help the state protect natural resources and provide for public access near Chimney Rock Park and on Rumbling Bald and Cane Creek Mountain.

The remaining \$2.32 million will be used to purchase 115 acres as part of a 249-acre land acquisition at Lake Norman State Park in Iredell County to expand the park's land base and to protect water quality. The division has also applied for a Clean Water Management Trust Fund grant to aid in the acquisition.

"This acquisition represents the largest land acquisition at Lake Norman since it was established," Don Reuter, Division of Parks and Recreation assistant director, said. "The purchase price is also 20 percent below the appraised value of the property."

The board also revised land acquisition grants for the 2006-07 fiscal year. The board had approved \$19.1 million in land acquisition projects based upon projected revenues. However, actual revenues were less than expected and funding for land acquisition totaled \$17.9 million.

The board approved reductions for projects at William B. Umstead and Crowders Mountain state parks and Sandy Run Savannas and Occaneechee state natural areas.



STATE SEN. JIM JACUMIN LED THE AUTHORITY MEMBERS ON A TOUR OF THE WALDENSIAN TRAIL OF FAITH IN VALDESE AFTER THEIR MEETING.

The reductions resulted from lower than anticipated appraised values, funds made available from alternative sources and landowner decisions not to sell,

"These reductions, resulting from the reduced revenue, have not and will not compromise our overall land protection effort," Reuter told the authority.

The authority also awarded 15 grants totaling \$4 million to local governments for parks and recreation projects. This represented fourth quarter revenues into that portion of the trust fund reserved for the local grant program.

The 2006-07 funding cycle produced 54 grants totaling \$17 million, with the majority of those awarded at a May meeting. This year the authority considered 80 grant applications, with local governments requesting more than \$24 million.

In other business, the authority approved an amendment to the trust fund administrative rules to create a conversion policy for local government

parks and recreation projects.

The amendment, which had been sent out for public comment following the board's meeting in March, generated limited but mostly favorable feedback and is supported by the departmental legal counsel.

The rule must be considered and approved by the state's Rules Review Commission before it goes into effect.

Much like the federal Land and Water Conservation Program, after which PARTF is patterned, the conversion process would provide a mechanism for off-setting or replacing PARTF-assisted lands and facilities which are converted to a use other than public recreation. The conversion policy, which is recommended by the division's legal counsel, would only be available in cases where the public recreation loss is fully documented as unavoidable.

Lewis Ledford, director of the division, provided board members with a division status report and update on legislation in the General Assembly.

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HANGING ROCK DEDICATES TRAILS, CABINS

Improvements at Hanging Rock State Park extend well beyond the park's boundaries into the heart of the local community, Danbury Mayor Jane Priddy Charleville said during a dedication ceremony June 22.

Those boundaries lie just beyond the town limits of the Stokes County seat.

"A lot of the promotion of tourism here has been on Hanging Rock's shoulders. Hanging Rock serves as a visitor center for Stokes," Charleville said. "The state park has become more and more important in how we measure our quality of life here."

The park dedicated four new vacation cabins as well as improvements to its six existing cabins and extensive renovations to two popular trails.

The projects, begun in 2005, represent an investment of \$1.9 million from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

Both Charleville and Bill Garrity, chairman of the park's citizens advisory committee, offered public thanks for the trust fund which supports all capital improvements and land acquisition for state parks.

Expanding the complex of vacation cabins was first envisioned in the park's 1981 master plan and the new year-round cabins are similar in style to those built in 1954. Improvements to existing cabins include facelifts and new insulation and porches.

The project cost was \$928,599. Architect was McCrae-Joyce Associates of Greensboro, and general contractor was R.P. Murray Inc. of Kernersville.

Erik Nygard, park superintendent said the trails projects extend an important legacy begun by former superintendent Tommy Wagoner, who lobbied hard for trail improvements during his tenure and supervised renovations to several over-worked trail sections before his retirement.



VISITORS AND STAFF TOUR NEW VACATION CABINS.



PART OF RENOVATED LOWER CASCADES TRAIL.

Wagoner attended the ceremony as did Marion James, a former member of the Civilian Conservation Corps, which built the park and laid out many of its trails in the 1930s.

The two renovated trails are popular ones. The Lower Cascades Trail leads to a scenic waterfall. Renovation of a steep, three-tenths mile portion involved creating stone steps and installing retaining walls and a 60-foot-long pedestrian bridge to improve safety and access.

The Moore's Wall Loop Trail gives serious hikers access to 360-degree views of the park from the summit of the rock outcrop. A particularly steep one-mile section of the 4.2-mile trail was renovated to improve the trail surface and control erosion.

More than 480 tons of rock were used to create stone steps and 900 cubic yards of sand rock and 188 tons of ballast stones were used for the surface.

Much of the material was transported to the site by Black Hawk helicopters provided by the N.C. Air National Guard as a training exercise and public service project.

Park rangers worked with the National Guard and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission to schedule 370 helicopter flights in a way that would not disturb a sensitive nesting area for peregrine falcons. (An active nest was recorded this season.)

Park Drive Studios Landscape Architecture of Raleigh was the project's designer and the general contractor was Peter S. Jensen Associates of Great Barrington, MA.

"It's a significant investment we're putting into trails in the western parks, but we're trying to build them to last for generations," said Lewis Ledford, director of the division of Parks and Recreation.

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*FOLLOWING THE GRAND
OPENING CEREMONY FOR
THE BIRDING TRAIL HELD AT
THE PARK'S VISITOR CENTER,
FIELD TRIPS INCLUDED A
SOJOURN TO BEAR ISLAND
WHERE SPECIES INCLUDE
COLONIAL SHORE BIRDS,
GROSBEAKS AND PAINTED
BUNTINGS.*



BIRDING TRAIL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

support birding trails, which are actually well-publicized lists of accessible spots that traveling birders can use to create an itinerary. It's an efficient way for them to add to their "lifetime lists" of species spotted.

The painted bunting was spotted, admired, duly noted and some of the dignitaries on the brief trip to Bear Island were already thinking ahead to similar birding trails planned for piedmont and coastal North Carolina.

It's fitting that the grand opening of the state's first birding trail was held at a coastal state park. The trail's 102 listed sites include 14 eastern state parks and three other areas managed by the Division of Parks and Recreation.

"Our priorities in state parks fit very comfortably with this effort," said Lewis Ledford, division director. Those include resource protection,

environmental education and low-impact outdoor recreation that builds a conservation ethic.

Parks also offer safe and easy access to prime birding sites as well as information and rangers who can answer questions and sometimes inspire budding naturalists.

Just in eastern North Carolina, state parks offer a stunning variety for birders – from snow geese and tundra swans at Pettigrew to migratory songbirds at Goose Creek to piping plovers and American oystercatchers at Hammocks Beach and Fort Fisher.

"When people come to believe in protecting natural resources, when they become stakeholders in that effort, it can ultimately benefit the birds themselves," Ledford said.

Early support for the trail came from the

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*AT RIGHT, LEDFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE
STATE PARKS SYSTEM, SPEAKS AT THE
GRAND OPENING CEREMONY. BELOW,
BIRDERS INCLUDED CHRIS CANFIELD,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF AUDUBON
NORTH CAROLINA, RIGHT.*



BIRDING TRAIL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Audubon organization and birding clubs, Canfield said. To some extent it grew from Audubon's designation of IBA's – "important bird areas" worthy of special efforts to protect critical habitats.

Most of the state parks have Audubon's IBA designation.

"The trail was sort of a perfect storm of people's interest," he said. "I was thinking there's a way to do this that doesn't require millions of dollars up front."

A partnership was created with Audubon, the state parks system, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, N.C. Cooperative Extension, N.C. Sea Grant and USFWS.

Communities in the east eager to develop eco-tourism eagerly signed on to help and are poised to promote the trail.

Wildlife Resources committed a trail coordinator position, and Salinda Daley took over from an Audubon volunteer to work fulltime on the effort.

A web site (ncbirdingtrail.org) has been built detailing the amenities and species likely to be found at each of the 102 sites, and a printed



PARK'S BIRD MOUNTS MADE A SPECIAL EXHIBIT.

guide was introduced at the opening ceremony.

A 2001 survey from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that Americans spent nearly \$32 billion on wildlife watching in the U.S. in that year. And, the N.C. Birds Records Committee recognizes 446 species in North Carolina, an impressive lifetime list that draws birders from far-flung states and Europe.

"Birds are the hook for an individual's increased interest in wildlife," said John Stanton of the USFWS.

TRUST FUND

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

"We continue to be very busy in the state parks system," said Ledford, who described recent facility dedications and celebrations at New River and Hanging Rock state parks and thanked board members for their support of those efforts.

Ledford described recent positive news coverage and marketing efforts, several new staff additions and recognized Kathy White the north-west region consultant for Recreation Resources Service, who recently announced plans to retire.

At the start of the meeting, authority member Lisa Weston, who was recently reappointed, was sworn in by Burke County Clerk of Court Mabel Lowman.

After the conclusion of the business



AUTHORITY CONSIDERS LOCAL GRANT REQUESTS.

meeting, Sen. Jim Jacumin of Burke County, a former authority member, hosted a tour of the Waldensian Trail of Faith in Valdese.

NEW VIEW AT 'THE ROCK'

A VISITOR TO HANGING ROCK STATE PARK SNAPPED THIS IMAGE OF A ROCK ON ONE OF THE TRAILS THAT LOOKS REMARKABLY LIKE THE OLD NORTH STATE. RANGERS ESTIMATE THE ROCK IS ABOUT 3-4 FEET ACROSS. (PHOTO BY MARK STANLEY)



TRAILS DAY SWEAT AND SATISFACTION

For Elizabeth Taylor of Chapel Hill, it was a chance to get that good volunteer feeling without the plane fare.

Taylor often spends her vacations volunteering at national parks and recreation areas in Wyoming, Colorado and other western states. But, she spent National Trails Day June 2 with other local volunteers upgrading the Pea Creek Trail at Eno River State Park.

"I gave up my morning run and don't have to do push-ups today," she joked as she hammered rebar into a length of treated lumber. "Seriously, I use the trails so, as a steward of the earth, it's important to take care of them."

National Trails Day is organized by the American Hiking Society, and it results in more than 110,000 volunteers appearing at more than 1,200 locations across the country to groom and build trails.

The state parks system is one of the beneficiaries.

At Eno River, rangers Jason Gwinn and Joe Martin



ELIZABETH TAYLOR, RIGHT, A VETERAN TRAILS VOLUNTEER, DECIDED TO SPEND THIS YEAR'S NATIONAL TRAILS DAY A BIT CLOSER TO HOME.

directed a group of about a dozen volunteers repairing waterbars and extending a series of steps.

They also took the opportunity to make it an environmental education experience, explaining how good trail construction and responsible hiking can control erosion and keep sediment out of the river.

According to the Ameri-

can Hiking Society, 87.5 million Americans walked for exercise in 2006, making it the most popular form of exercise. (Swimming, with 55.2 million participants, was a distant second.)

While organizers of the event focused on the health aspects of hiking, a sense of responsibility seemed to drive more of the volunteers.

"Aaron Loflin, a retired teacher, said, 'I come out here so much that I kind of feel obligated to help. I'm out here about every other day to get in a hike.'"

While parks around the state had trails day events including guided hikes, the event is especially popular in the Triangle area of Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill.

William B. Umstead State Park benefits from a corps of volunteers gathered by outfitter REI Inc.

And at Falls Lake, the Great Outdoor Provision Co. and The North Face, a manu-



VOLUNTEERS WRESTLE A WHEELBARROW OF FILL DIRT UP A SET OF STEPS ON THE PEA CREEK TRAIL AT ENO RIVER STATE PARK.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

McELHONE WILL LEAD LAKE JAMES

Sean McElhone, formerly a superintendent at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area, has been named superintendent of Lake James State Park in Burke County. McElhone succeeds Tim Benton, who retired earlier this year after 20 years at the park.

A superintendent is the chief of operations and administration at a state park or state recreation area with wide-ranging responsibilities for staffing, training, law enforcement, visitor services, natural resource protection and environmental education.

McElhone served as superintendent at Fort Fisher in New Hanover County since April 2006. A native of Pittsburgh, Pa., he earned an associate degree in forest technology and a bachelor's degree in rec-

reation and parks management, both from Penn State University in 2000.

McElhone was an intern at Mount Mitchell State Park, before joining the state parks system in 2000 as a ranger at Hammocks Beach State Park. He was a senior ranger at Jones Lake State Park and is a certified environmental educator.



"Lake James will be undergoing a tremendous transformation as we incorporate nearly 3,000 acres acquired from Crescent Resources Inc. and begin construction on the first phase of development,"

said Susan Tillotson, chief of operations. "Sean's experience as superintendent of a very busy state park and his dedication to protecting natural resources give him an excellent background to guide this important project."

McElhone said, "I'm very excited about this opportunity. With development guided by a new master plan, Lake James will be a state park that the state's citizens and guests will be proud to visit. I look forward to working with the park staff and the local community to help this vision become a reality."

Lake James State Park was created in 1987 and encompasses 3,514 acres on both the north and south shores of the lake. The park recorded 680,110 visits in 2006.

TRAILS DAY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

facturer of outdoor clothing, arranged for a group of more than 60 volunteers to work on a segment of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail. Along with providing breakfast, the sponsors presented a \$1,000 check to the Friends of the MST.

The volunteers responded with a long day's work in-

cluding installation of a 16-foot bridge.

Great Outdoor Provision Co. also teams with other area businesses to sponsor a simultaneous Land Trust Day donating a percentage of the day's profits to the Triangle Land Conservancy, a frequent partner with state parks in the

Triangle.

Participating businesses this year included Bean Traders, Cozy, Vaguely Reminiscent and The Playhouse Toy Store, all of Durham, the Wild Bird Center of Chapel Hill, Townshend Bertram & Company of Carrboro and Seaboard Wine Warehouse in Raleigh.



AT LEFT AND BELOW, VOLUNTEERS CARRY MATERIALS AND TOOLS TO THE SITE. THE EVENT IS PARTICULARLY POPULAR IN THE TRIANGLE WHERE PARKS ADJOIN URBAN AREAS.



PARKS FEATURED IN NEW GEOLOGY BOOK

Have you ever wondered why Pilot Mountain rises so abruptly from a fairly flat landscape, or why Jockey's Ridge is so tall? Would you like to know more about the origin of the Appalachian Mountains or the future of the Outer Banks? Do you like to visit waterfalls?

If so, you might be interested in a new book called *Exploring the Geology of the Carolinas: A Field Guide to Favorite Places from Chimney Rock to Charleston*.

The authors are Dr. Kevin G. Stewart, associate professor of geological sciences at UNC at Chapel Hill, and Mary-Russell Robertson, a freelance science writer living in Durham.

Stewart has taught at UNC for 20 years, winning a number of teaching awards along the way. He has also done extensive research in the Carolinas with a focus on the Blue Ridge Mountains and plate tectonic history of the area. Roberson writes about everything from astronomy to zoology and especially enjoys writing about geology.

"We felt there was a real need for a book like this that would be accessible to non-scientists," Stewart said. "We want to help people see the Carolinas in a new way."

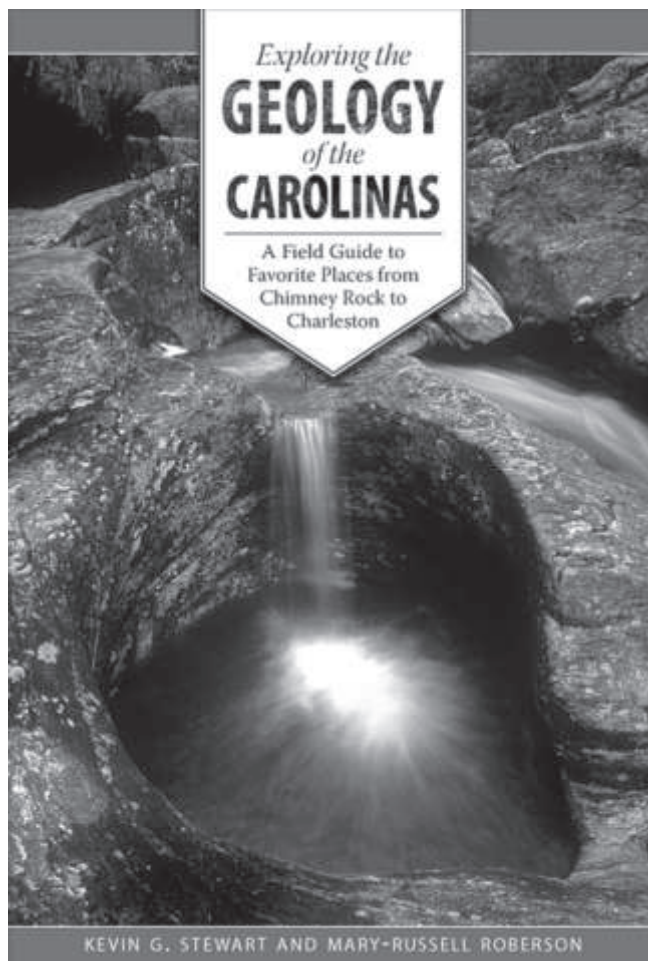
The book begins with an overview of geology and the geologic history of the Carolinas, followed by 31 "field trips" to popular outdoor sites. Each field trip examines prominent geologic features and explains the origin of these features in the context of geologic history.

Fourteen North Carolina state parks are featured as well as Chimney Rock Park, which is to be incorporated into the developing Hickory Nut Gorge State Park.

"We hope our readers who are not geologists will take away some big-picture ideas about how geologists work and the fact that the way the Carolinas look today is really just a snapshot in geologic time," Stewart said. "Most of all, we hope readers will learn to think like geologists when they're outside – to notice landforms and rocks and to wonder about them."

The state parks featured include: Carolina Beach, Cliffs of the Neuse, Crowders Mountain, Eno River, Gorges, Jockey's Ridge, Jones Lake, Medoc Mountain, Morrow Mountain, Mount Mitchell, Pilot Mountain, Raven Rock, South Mountains and Stone Mountain.

Exploring the Geology of the Carolinas is 320 pages, with 86 black-and-white illustrations,



12 color plates, 44 maps and an extensive glossary. The color plates were made possible by generous donations from Friends of State Parks and the Tar Heel Gem and Mineral Club.

Information about the book can be found at <http://uncpress.unc.edu/blooks/T-6234.html>.

HANGING ROCK

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

In recent years, the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority has set aside \$500,000 a year for regular trail maintenance and there have been nine major renovation projects at five of the western parks.

Hanging Rock's staff estimates that at least 100,000 of its roughly 400,000 annual visitors spend time on its trail system.

Hanging Rock is one of our oldest and best known state parks with a storied history that reaches back to the Civilian Conservation Corps," Ledford said. As attendance increases, these improvements will help ensure that the park's popular amenities will continue to serve the public in the spirit of the CCC."

NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS

MONTHLY ATTENDANCE REPORT

MAY, 2007

NC STATE PARK	May 2007	TOTAL YTD May-07	May 2006	TOTAL YTD May-06	% CHANGE (2007/2006) May YTD	
CABE	59,212	187,258	46,416	174,234	28%	7%
CLNE	14,409	51,426	9,967	34,404	45%	49%
CRMO	37,702	164,402	34,041	152,078	11%	8%
ENRI	35,329	136,019	31,839	123,346	11%	10%
FALA	161,100	357,857	176,645	343,932	-9%	4%
FOFI	75,453	224,602	71,550	250,152	5%	-10%
FOMA	132,034	399,628	136,130	417,798	-3%	-4%
GOCR	19,138	65,622	15,673	60,134	22%	9%
GORG	12,826	36,385	7,688	22,399	67%	62%
HABE	12,273	37,098	16,917	45,513	-27%	-18%
HARI	0	8,409	0	0	-100%	-100%
HARO	50,807	154,972	45,364	143,132	12%	8%
JONE	14,088	26,947	12,766	25,916	10%	4%
JORD	114,162	244,798	103,785	291,979	10%	-16%
JORI	168,871	456,039	102,935	277,277	64%	64%
KELA	146,148	334,288	115,636	349,732	26%	-4%
LAJA	51,609	133,755	56,047	157,825	-8%	-15%
LANO	41,931	169,374	51,774	189,135	-19%	-10%
LAWA	11,560	32,955	9,992	35,278	16%	-7%
LURI	9,784	34,400	7,355	29,560	33%	16%
MEMI	13,952	58,604	19,652	73,262	-29%	-20%
MEMO	6,360	19,258	6,904	19,889	-8%	-3%
MOJE	6,316	26,224	8,083	22,961	-22%	14%
MOMI	34,189	58,066	31,438	49,121	9%	18%
MOMO	40,960	141,620	38,660	117,102	6%	21%
NERI	9,817	21,666	16,195	50,867	-39%	-57%
OCMO	6,531	26,336	5,232	24,839	25%	6%
PETT	7,099	26,991	8,356	28,314	-15%	-5%
PIMO	39,612	143,201	37,291	134,818	6%	6%
RARO	9,655	42,196	10,538	42,157	-8%	0%
SILA	0	7,549	2,914	13,554	-100%	-44%
SOMO	23,874	82,259	21,890	78,372	9%	5%
STMO	51,208	161,284	38,936	138,448	32%	16%
WEWO	0	16,527	4,231	19,633	-100%	-16%
WIUM	53,717	237,045	55,829	238,652	-4%	-1%
SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL	1,471,726	4,325,060	1,358,669	4,175,813	8%	4%



Our Mission Remains...

to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;
to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina;
to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources for all citizens and visitors.

*8,000 copies of this public document were printed
at a cost of \$630.00 or \$0.08 per copy.*

SAFETY ZONE

SAFELY DONE MAKES SUMMER MORE FUN

- ✓Protect against sun exposure by wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses and applying sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 on exposed skin.
- ✓See your doctor if you develop skin irregularities such as an unusual mole, scaly patch or sore.
- ✓Keep arms and legs covered when outdoors in wooded areas to protect against ticks and poisonous plants.
- ✓Be sure to drink plenty of water when exercising or working outdoors.

The Steward
NC Division of Parks and Recreation
Public Information Office
1615 MSC
Raleigh, NC 27699-1615

